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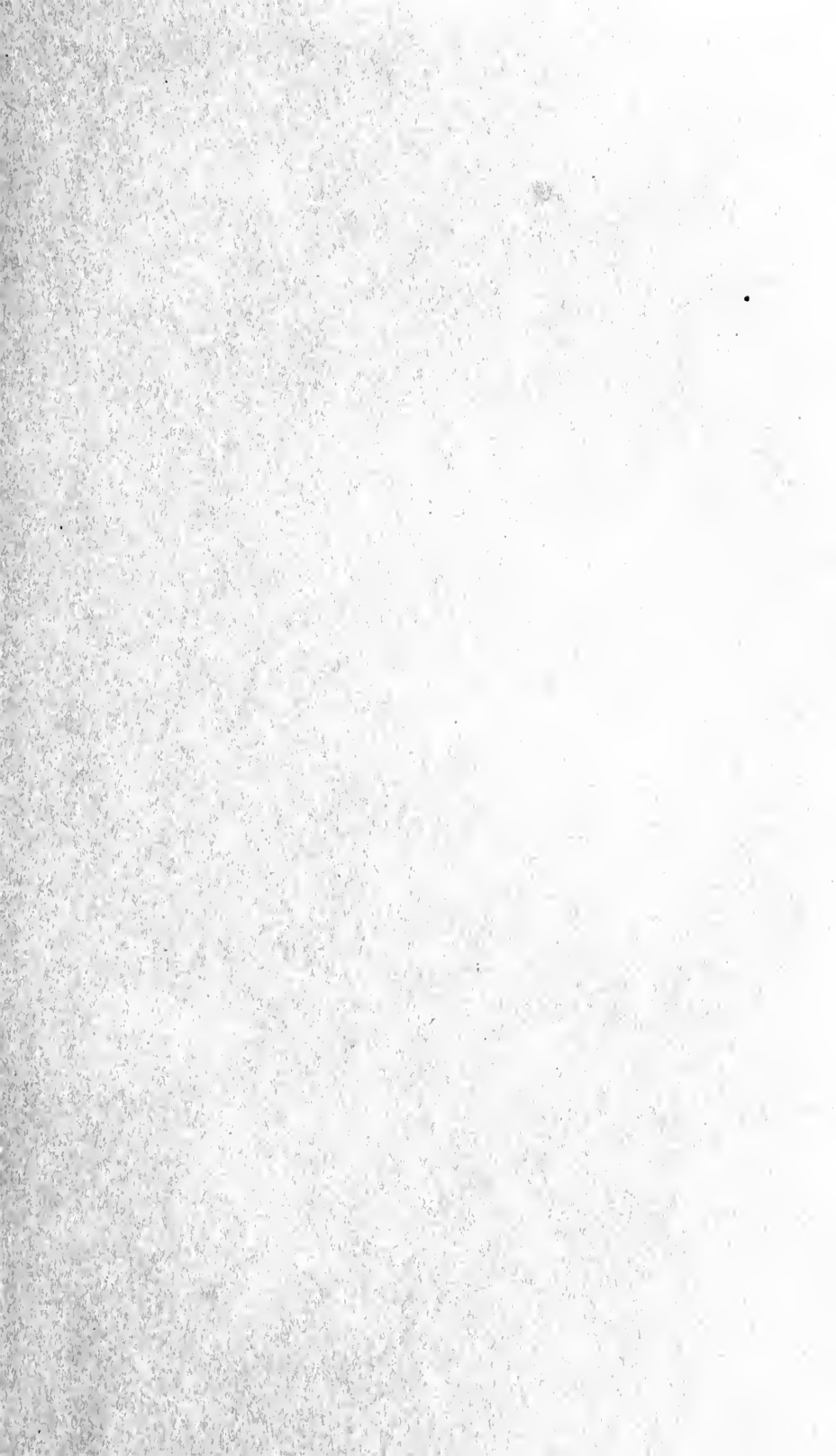
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LIBRARY SCHOOL



Exercises at the Opening
of the
New Library Building
of the
Free Public Library

New Bedford, Massachusetts

December First

1910



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LIBRARY SCHOOL **LIBRARY**

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LIBRARY SQUARE

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Library
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PROGRAMME

Prayer.

Rev. Matthew C. Julien.

Introductory Remarks.

Hon. Charles S. Ashley.

Address—The Public Library and the Community.

Frank P. Hill, Litt. D.

Address—The Public Library and the Public School.

Prof. William MacDonald.

Address—A Historical Sketch of the New Bedford Library.

George H. Tripp.

Address—What the Public Library Means to New Bedford.

Horace G. Wadlin, Litt. D.

Music by Sullivan's Orchestra.

MC32320

Following the prayer by Rev. Mr. Julien, in opening the dedication exercises, Mayor Ashley addressed the company.

MAYOR CHARLES S. ASHLEY

It is my privilege to declare this edifice now open to the City of New Bedford.

From this hour forward, these halls shall be a capable depository for our priceless volumes, and a fitting place for research and instruction. Here ends a situation whereby a library collection made up of a wealth of material has nevertheless been limited in its usefulness, because of the inadequacy of the structure containing it. Both the building and the books are now worthy of each other, and the public welfare will be distinctly promoted by the change that has been made.

For myself, I am conscious of a pardonable sense of pride in the consummation of this undertaking I had the honor to recommend. The end sought to be accomplished has been brought about in a most satisfactory way. I view the finished work with gratification; I am sure public opinion will give enthusiastic approval. All that is here is the result of a union of labors well qualified to produce a library to meet all the requirements that may be exacted of it; that success has crowned those efforts I make no question; pleasurable surprise is the attitude I have noted in most observers and expressions of genuine appreciation reach my ears from every side.

A creditable public sentiment demanded that the architectural excellence of our former City Hall should be preserved; that extensions and enlargements should not mar the harmony of its dignified proportions; and that considerations reflecting the refinement of art should govern in everything incorporated in this honorable building. It was a marked instance of civic pride and reverence for local history and tradition. As a City Hall, long before the time

of the fire, it had failed to meet the requirements of a municipal business place. Very few departments had quarters in it; the general uses to which it was put were inconsistent with its splendid appearance. Its general arrangements, appropriate for a town, were never, even in a small degree, suitable for a city's uses.

The old library building, long outgrown in the quarters from which it took its name, has always been devoted in a great part to city offices. Neither building filled its intended mission and questions of convenience were straightway in evidence when we were confronted with the necessity of treating this interior, ruined by fire, with its noble walls standing and resisting destruction.

That it was possible to secure a grand library became apparent,—that no mistake should be made was imperative. Respect for sentiment, judgment in preparation and fidelity in execution, then became the essentials to be ever kept in mind, and my congratulation goes forward to you that there has been no departure from those obligations. That this structure, within and without, is a combination embracing art, luxury, and utility in degrees not often attained is my sincere belief and fixed conviction.

I purposely refrain from addressing you upon the history, function, and destiny of libraries in general, but rather content myself with such few words as seem to me to be appropriate to this one in particular. It is eminently proper that these dedication exercises should direct your attention to the thoughts to be expressed by others well qualified to speak from the depth of their knowledge and experience. Of the importance of the work we now engage to continue, it can surely be said that it is as present and pressing as when first entered upon by our pioneer library of eminent fame and fruitful history. I bespeak for it a growing and increasing place in our municipal progress and advancement.

Following his own address, Mayor Ashley introduced Dr. Hill.



DELIVERY DESK

FRANK P. HILL

A long, long time ago, at least it seems so to me, my good friend and fellow classmate, and your efficient and successful librarian, George H. Tripp, exacted from me a promise to be present at the opening of the new building of the New Bedford Public Library. The event seemed so far in the future that I readily agreed. But when he wrote me a few days ago that the date was set for December 1st, I was inclined to make excuses. It then occurred to me that if I did "back out" my good friend would no longer be a friend, and that risk I could not afford to take.

It has been my privilege from time to time to assist in meetings called to arouse an interest in the establishment of a free public library and to participate in the inauguration of public libraries in new fields. On this occasion, however, it is not necessary to attempt to arouse interest in the library movement or to impress upon you the value of a public library to the community.

Your library is already ripe with age, and the people of New Bedford have long appreciated its advantages. It is not a new enterprise. The foundation was firmly laid many years ago by those who constituted the early boards of trustees. Indeed, I cannot congratulate you too highly upon your good fortune in having as sponsors at the very beginning such liberal and clear-visioned men. The early reports of the library plainly indicate that not only was New Bedford the first municipality to take advantage of the Massachusetts law providing for the establishment of a free public library, but they record the earnest efforts of the trustees to make the library a source of pleasure and profit to a very large portion of the citizens.

I congratulate you, too, because looking back over your history it is evident that the public library in New Bedford

has had a normal and gradual growth. There have been no radical changes in either methods or management, the plan upon which the original work was inaugurated being practically identical with the present ideal of what a public library should be. The library has grown in size, to be sure! It has put out new branches, it has brought forth many blossoms and much fruit; but the character of the plant has not changed. This library has not been transformed from a mercantile or subscription library; it always has been free to the public.

You are therefore fortunate in having been able to develop your resources without being obliged to expend your energies in reorganization. Furthermore the community is exceptionally favored in having had in the 58 years of its library history only two librarians. Those who are in touch with library work in this country can heartily concur in the acknowledgment made by the trustees of their indebtedness to the ability and devotion of your first librarian, Robert C. Ingraham. The work so well begun and so admirably conducted by him for half a century has fallen into the strong hands of your present librarian and by him been carried forward.

So well have the trustees and librarians conducted the affairs of the library that today a new and larger edifice is dedicated to public library uses.

You may well be proud of it for you have not depended upon the generosity of any single person but have willingly taxed yourselves to provide money for its erection. It does not bear the name of an individual but will be known for all time as the New Bedford Free Public Library. Architecturally beautiful it will serve as a landmark for years to come.

But this building is only a storehouse. The treasures in it must be accessible to all. In this age we demand of all our institutions definite and practical results, and the library is not an exception to this general rule. Is the library living up to expectations?

During the month of October last an exhibition was held in New York city which was known as the Budget Exhibit. It was planned by the board of estimate and apportionment of the city and was prepared by the heads of departments and institutions receiving money from the city.

Its purpose was threefold:

(a)—To show how the money provided by the city is spent and to submit for examination the various pleas for increased appropriations.

(b)—To afford the citizens of Greater New York the opportunity of making a comparative study of the use of appropriations made to the various departments.

(c)—To enable the people to form an opinion of the effectiveness of departmental work.

As a participant in this exhibit the public libraries of the city were called upon to show the results of their work. This was done by means of charts, maps, statistics, and photographs showing the increase and improvement in quarters, equipment, resources, and use.

During the exhibit the library committee realized more forcibly than ever the fact that the work of the library, owing to its intangibility, could not be satisfactorily shown by charts, diagrams, or by any standard yet devised.

Through the library's influence the lives of the people are made richer, the conditions under which they live improved, and their characters strengthened. Such work cannot be presented in figures.

The library also serves the needs of the work-a-day world, enabling the artisan to become more skillful, the mechanic more proficient, the housewife more capable, and the professional man broader-minded.

The practical resources of our libraries are only beginning to be appreciated.

This was evidenced at the exhibit. Here a small collection of books was placed on shelves as an index to the larger collections which the libraries contained. The list included such books as:

Gebhardt's Steam Power Plant Engineering,

Hatfield's Modern Accounting,
Lowe's Electric Railway Troubles and How to Find
Them.

Deland's Imagination in Business.

The interest shown in the books by the thousands of business men—young and old—who dropped into the exhibit, as well as the surprise many of them expressed when they learned that such books could be procured from a public library made the committee feel the need of a wider advertisement of our resources. Most of those men probably considered a library a desirable asset in any community. Many of them undoubtedly thought it of some service to those who had time to enjoy it. Others perhaps looked forward to a time when they would have the leisure to avail themselves of its treasures; but none of them had before thought of it as containing anything of practical use.

The Budget Exhibit gave us the opportunity of showing such men that the library is in a real sense "the people's university," and that hundreds had bettered their condition in life and fitted themselves for higher responsibilities by using the books furnished freely by the library.

As an evidence of how the library had helped people a circular entitled "Results not shown by statistics" was prepared and distributed. This contained expressions of appreciation made by borrowers who had obtained assistance from books in the libraries.

One example will serve as an illustration: "It is the greatest place on earth for a poor man to get a good education." The man who said this had been obliged to leave school early in order to support his family, but he always wanted to be a first class engineer. He studied at Cooper Institute, but did not gain the knowledge he desired. One day at one of our branches he found some easy books on the subject of engineering. After one year's study he returned to Cooper Institute and passed the examinations in which he had failed the year before. He gave it as his opinion that "a lot of fellows failed because they didn't know all the

good they could get from the library." Such work is worth while.

To be able to help those who earnestly desire to educate themselves and have not the means to buy books is no unworthy problem, and this is the work our public libraries are trying to solve.

No one now need to voice the sentiment contained in Lang's "Ballad of the Unattainable:"

"Prince, hear a hopeless bard's appeal;

Reverse the rule of mine and thine;

Make it legitimate to steal

The books that never can be mine."

The generous bequests which from time to time the New Bedford library has received have placed it in a somewhat unusual position. Here the interest received from endowment funds is large enough to purchase such new books and replacements as are added to the library each year. Whether this income is large enough for the purchase of all the books which could be used to advantage in New Bedford is for your trustees and librarian to decide. But from my experience I would say that while the book fund is always the one which can be increased with the greatest benefit to those who use the library, it is almost always the first item to be cut if a reduction is to be made in the appropriation.

There are some libraries that have an adequate fund for the purchase of books and little enough for maintenance and salaries, and there are libraries moving from old to new quarters that are skimped in appropriation and have not enough money to pay actual expenses. I trust that New Bedford is not in either class.

The question of support is always a vital one to every institution, public or private, and the appropriation of money sufficient for the actual needs of any branch of the city's work depends too frequently upon other things than the real merits of the case. The time should come in the administration of our municipal affairs when the board charged with appropriating money for conducting city business will consider each department in the city government as a defi-

nite part of a whole, and will apportion appropriations according to the importance of each department, and for its proper development.

In spite of the long and meritorious past of your library, I think I may venture the opinion that not even in this community, which so early realized the importance and possibilities of a free public library, is the function of the library in its relation to other branches of the city's activities fully understood, nor is the appropriation granted the library each year made according to the importance of the work. In New York I am sure this is not the case. As compared with the incomes of other libraries, the financial support in Greater New York may be said to be generous, but when the library appropriation of any city is compared with that made other departments or institutions supported by city money it will be found that the library suffers by comparison.

Some of us may remember the agitation caused by the introduction of "free" schools supported by taxation. Many conscientious men questioned any responsibility for the education and training of their neighbor's child; and those who had no children felt it unjust that they should be obliged to share the cost of the instruction of the children in the community. But when the idea was finally adopted it received such hearty support that the development of the public school system throughout the country was rapid and progressive. The idea of the "public" maintenance of libraries was introduced later and met with the same opposition in many communities that had manifested itself in the effort to secure money for schools.

In the case of the schools the opposition has almost entirely disappeared, and liberal appropriations pass annually without objection, but there is still some objection to library appropriations. There should be no difference of feeling, as both are educational in character, the library continuing the work of the schools with those who have completed its course, and affording opportunity for study to those who have been obliged to leave school at an early age.

In the support of our schools each taxpayer must share the expense whether or no he can benefit directly from the school system. In the support of the library each person contributing can receive a direct return. Although the amount contributed by each individual may be insignificant, in the aggregate it makes possible the purchase, care, and preservation of a collection of books larger than any one would find it practicable or possible to accumulate for his own use.

What does each person's share of the expense of the library amount to? In New York the cost of maintaining the public libraries in the greater city is slightly under 25 cents per capita, in New Bedford it is 15.7 per capita. For this small expenditure in New Bedford there is placed at your disposal the entire resources of the library, including books, pictures, and the services of the librarian and his assistants.

You will readily see that this small amount would not go far in providing the books, magazines, or even newspapers which you personally read during the year.

I do not know the facts in New Bedford but I do know that in New York we appropriate 24 times as much for our schools as we do for our libraries, 12 times as much for our police protection, 7 times as much for protection against fire, and more than twice as much for public charities.

I do not wish to suggest that any department of the city should receive less than at present, but I do earnestly urge that in this and every community the public library should receive such financial support from the city government as will enable it to become an efficient part of the educational system of the municipality; that the services of librarians and assistants should be adequately compensated; that the book collections inherited from the past should be preserved, enriched, and enlarged for future generations as well as for present use; that the library being well housed should be adequately maintained, and that the building itself should be kept in good repair.

If the city government and the people of New Bedford, having erected this beautiful and spacious building, will continue to provide adequately for its maintenance, this library will always stand in the front rank of library achievement, and those whose duty it is to administer it for your benefit will be encouraged to increase its effectiveness and extend its usefulness.



PROFESSOR WILLIAM MacDONALD

Of all the many changes which have come about in the theory and practice of library administration in this country, none is of more far-reaching significance, or likely, apparently, to undergo more helpful development, than that by which the public library has come to be regarded as one of the educational agencies of the community. Thanks to the growth of popular education, the demand for intelligence as well as skill in trades and business, and the zeal and self-sacrifice of public-spirited librarians, the library has ceased to be looked upon as a storehouse for books accumulated but not read, or a place to pass an idle hour in desultory reading, or a haven of refuge for benevolent old people with superabundant leisure. On the contrary, it has become, to a remarkable degree, one of the great educational forces of the modern world, employing a staff of trained experts, ministering to the needs of all classes and all occupations, and co-operating closely and heartily with every agency, public or private, which has for its object the better education of the whole people. I cannot better use the time which has been allotted to me in the programme of this your day of rejoicing, than by calling briefly to your mind the indispensable relation between the public library and the public school.

We are undertaking in this country the tremendous experiment of educating, at public expense, the entire population. From the kindergarten to the university, in the majority of our states, and through the high school or technical school in all of them, we offer graded courses of instruction either entirely free of cost to the individual student, or at merely nominal expense. Year by year we build more and better schoolhouses, yet even so can hardly keep pace with the numbers who seek admission to them. We are forever

overhauling our courses of study to make them more practical and sensible, more genuinely educational and useful. In the range of its studies, the skilled preparation of its teachers, the beauty, convenience and healthfulness of its building, the efficiency of its teaching, and the substantial results in the lives of its pupils, the American public school of today is infinitely superior to the school of a generation ago; and the end of its improvement is not yet.

What has really happened, of course, is that our conception of the nature of the school has changed. Instead of the perfunctory learning of lessons out of a book, stimulated by liberal use of the rod and the dunce cap, we have found a better way. Public school pupils today are encouraged to read books, magazines and newspapers, to collect plants and minerals, to study pictures and take photographs, to draw maps and construct diagrams and charts. The drill in grammar is constantly supplemented by the use of literature; mathematical principles are early given some practical application; the chemical laboratory directs attention to problems of good food and proper sanitation; modern history and current events take their place in the curriculum along with the history of Greece, or Rome, or early England. There are excursions to historic sites, or public buildings, or the homes of famous men; dramatic representations of plays studied in the classrooms; concerts and memorial exercises; and moot courts, parliaments, and city councils to illustrate the course in civil government. All of our best schools today are doing these things, and doing them increasingly; and it is through the doing of them that our schools are being vitalized, and transformed, not into gloomy prisons where tasks are set, but into social centres where children spend their happiest hours. And we are doing this, remember, for everybody at public expense, because popular education means for us not only social well being, but social safety as well.

It is at this point that the public library comes to the aid of the school. While the school must always concern itself chiefly with systematic instruction along certain es-

sential lines, the library can supplement and enrich that instruction and show its wider application and relationship. Its collection of books, for example, will always be many times greater than that of any high or grammar school. We are, to be sure, slowly coming to realize the need of better school libraries, provided with at least the best and newest cyclopedias, dictionaries, reference manuals and standard works of history, biography, and literature; but the public library, serving as it does the needs of the whole community, will always have the greater number and wider range of books. By loans to the schools, however, by purchase of duplicate copies of books much in demand, by the reservation of books specially wanted by particular classes, as well as by systematic purchases in fields where the demand is greatest, it has in its power to supplement and strengthen the work of every teacher, and enhance the interest and value of every study.

In its provision of certain classes of books, too, the library can help the school greatly. Such things as atlases, indispensable for the study of geography; illustrated works in science, or the choice illustrated editions of standard authors; books of travel and adventure, and accounts of the most recent scientific discoveries or political occurrences, must as a rule be looked for in the public library. The same is true of maps and charts, pictures, and statistical works of all sorts. A modern high school uses all of this sort of material, when it can get it, to supplement its classroom work; but it looks to the library to provide it. The skillful librarian, keeping in touch with the work of the schools, will anticipate their needs by timely purchases; put out on the shelves, in plain sight, well chosen lists of books relating to topics which a class is studying; display illustrative maps and pictures; and stand ready to help the pupil whose interest has been aroused, and who needs guidance in reading further.

Every public library, further, ought to have its collection of books specially intended for teachers, and relating to the theory and practice of their profession. We demand

greater and greater efficiency in our teachers, but we do not always remember that one of the strongest aids to efficiency is the reading of the books in which experts of wide experience tell how the work of teaching may best be done. Few teachers, with the miserable pittance which we call salaries, can afford to buy many books; and we owe it to them to provide the books through the agency of the public library. I hope that you possess in this library a good collection of the best recent books on such subjects as school management and organization, school sanitation and hygiene, the conduct of classes, and the many other things which a good teacher ought to know. I hope that you are also keeping on file the best educational journals and school reports, not only of this state and of the United States, but also of foreign countries; for, do as well as we may, we can always learn something of value from our neighbors.

What I have said of books holds true also of magazines and newspapers. No school can be expected to provide itself with much of this sort of literature, or to afford the space and assistance needed to keep it in order; but the public library ought to have a good deal of it, and the pupils of all ages ought to learn how to use it. Some of the best work in history and biography, the best narratives of travel or exploration, the best accounts of scientific achievements, and the best discussions of social problems, appear today in the pages of magazines and newspapers; and if the school is to keep its knowledge up to date, and prevent the moss from growing on the back of our educational system, it must keep in touch with the best that is being thought and said in the world. Especially ought every boy and girl of high school age to be taught how to read the newspaper; to read it with discrimination and common sense, to pick out from its columns that which is really worth while, and to follow carefully its daily record of events. Only through the public library, however, is this likely to be done, for only there can one find papers and magazines in variety, representing different sections of the country and different points of view.

I spoke a moment ago of pictures and illustrated books. Of all the services which it is in the power of the library to render, few surpass in interest that which attends the regular and systematic exhibition of pictures and illustrated material. With the numerous inexpensive photographs and other reproductions now available, it is possible for a library with but very moderate funds to put out, in the course of the year, a series of exhibitions covering a wide range. Castles, cathedrals, harbors, cities, roads, gardens, farms, mines, ships, animals, routes of explorers, battle scenes or plans of campaigns, famous persons, statuary, paintings, interior furnishing and decoration—these and a hundred other interests of the great world can be displayed in graphic form, at small cost, to the instruction and delight of old and young. Nothing more surely draws children to the library than a picture show, a popular lecture with lantern slides, or a collection of prints or objects illustrating some current incident of which every one is talking. Let us not forget that there is an education of the eye, the judgment, and the taste, as well as the education of the printed page. The mind has many doors, some of which may be open while others are shut; but the library and the school together hold the keys to all of them.

I have been speaking thus far mainly of adults, and of those pupils to whom reading is, or ought to be, a matter of no difficulty. But I must not forget two other classes, to whose happiness and welfare the combined work of school and library stand very close. And first, always, the young children. In the great public library of the city of Providence, nothing interests me so much as the children's room. There come by scores and hundreds the little boys and girls, most of them from homes where books are few. They are able to read simple words and sentences, or to understand and enjoy simple narratives and stories, but they are often not yet old enough to know particularly what they want, or wisely to choose one book rather than another. On the open shelves around the room is the children's library; the children may themselves take down the books and look them

over, if so be they are old enough to make a choice, or they may go to the kindly, experienced woman at the desk, and let her choose for them. There are little collections of prints on the walls, and more in an adjoining room; here in front of you, on a bulletin board, is perhaps a list of birds, with the dates and places of first discovery; and yonder some early wild flowers. Surely one cannot but bless an institution which thus, with thoughtful care, shows young children how to find happiness in books, or sends to innumerable humble homes one strong beam of light. Never mind if the childish fingers are not too clean, or if books and covers soon soil and wear out; it is a good investment that any community is making when it shows its children how and what to read, and makes them welcome in the place where books are kept.

And when I say the children, I include the children of the alien as well as of the nation. Whether we like it or not—and it makes absolutely no difference whether we like it or not—it seems to be our destiny, here in New England, to attract to our manufacturing centres peoples of foreign birth and alien speech; and they are here to stay. Americans they are certainly becoming, day by day, and it is for us to say of what sort their Americanism is to be. I greatly wish that we might go much further than we have commonly gone in meeting these non-English neighbors on their own ground, so far as education through books is concerned. I was for a year and a half, some time since, the chairman of the school committee in a New England mill town of 6,000 people, one-half of whose population was French-Canadian. Very few of the older people spoke English, or at best could use a few phrases with great difficulty; and almost all the children spoke French. Yet the town could not be induced to provide French-speaking teachers for the entering classes in the lower grades, and the trustees of the town library absolutely refused to purchase so much as one book in French. The result, of course, was that half of the population of that town, too poor to buy books for itself, had no books to read, just because it didn't happen to know Eng-

lish. There were some comfortable homes among those operatives, but there were no books in them.

I have always thought that this was a grave mistake. No human power, we may be sure, is strong enough to maintain for long the use of any but the English tongue in America: the practical conditions of our daily lives compel to uniformity of speech. But we do need very much to form the reading habit as soon and as firmly as possible, as an indispensable means to that universal popular education which is also indispensable. I hope, therefore, that in the scheme of your library you have made provision for books in every language spoken in this city by any appreciable number of persons; so that no man, woman, or child, who can read at all shall have to turn away from the doors which are thrown open today, because in this free public library there is no book in the only language which God has permitted him to speak. We have tried for years in Providence the experiment of providing in our public library good books in foreign languages, and with results which abundantly justify it.

It is in such ways as these that the public library, co-operating with the public school, contributes to the education of the community. They are joint educational agencies, working together for a common end,—the enrichment of social life and the increase of social efficiency. They do not duplicate one another, either in the methods which they pursue or in the work in which they engage: they supplement one another. Their tasks bring them into association, not into competition. In the expenditure of its funds, accordingly, the library will keep prominently in mind the needs of teachers and pupils in all the various grades, equalizing its facilities, as far as possible, so that all may be helped: while the schools, on their part, will send their pupils and their teachers to the library, draw systematically upon its collections for classroom illustrations and for the further development of good teaching, and cultivate the reading habit in the home. These are public tasks. Less and less, in this country, are we leaving education and social

betterment to private individuals or private institutions; more and more is the city as a whole rousing itself to care for its own people, under its own direction and at its own expense; and it is a happy day for any community where a public library opens its doors, and goes forth to join in this great civic work.

In emphasizing as I have the relation of the public library to the public school, I have had no thought, of course, of neglecting or minimizing the work of the library in other directions. The development of the reading habit, that one sure basis of all culture, in adults as well as in children; the ample provision of magazines and newspapers, through which the thought and ambition, as well as the achievement of the present time are expressed; the building up of special collections of books, especially, in such a city as this, of books on technical, industrial, artistic, and business subjects; the establishment of branch libraries, however small, wherever the circulation or use of books will be facilitated thereby; the exhibition of manuscripts, autographs, rare books, or historical objects, illustrating the growth of the printing art or the history of our own or foreign peoples; the recognition of holidays, festivals, anniversaries, or notable dates by appropriate exercises or exhibits: all these things, too, are worthy and necessary parts of the great field of social service which American public libraries have begun to enter, and in which they seem destined to achieve conspicuous and permanent success. There is no department of our common life which the library of any community may not touch with vitalizing power, making life more interesting, labor more productive, homes more attractive, pleasure more happy and enduring.

I bring you congratulations of Brown University upon the new and enlarged facilities which this free public library is henceforth to enjoy. Having ourselves just entered upon the use of a new building, the need of which has long been imperative, we are able to appreciate keenly the pleasure which the occupancy of this attractive and commodious structure brings to you. I congratulate the librarian upon

his task and his opportunity. And if, 25 or 50 years from now, another audience gathers to dedicate a still larger and more commodious building, it will be because the library whose new home is opened today has made its influence potent in the higher life of this whole city and brought guidance, inspiration, and happiness to all who dwell among you.

GEORGE H. TRIPP

In an address by Professor Bliss Perry, at the dedication of the Brookline Library last month, he emphasized the fact that there is in American life a strong undercurrent of idealism under the most striking examples of material aggrandizement. No better illustration of this could be furnished than in the history of this library. It is, indeed, of great significance that at the time when New Bedford was at the height of its fame as the greatest whaling city of the world; when all the streets were literally running with oil; when its material prosperity was great; certain public spirited citizens should have bestirred themselves to give New Bedford an opportunity to furnish a means for a more liberal culture in the arts of refinement.

When the Massachusetts legislature in May, 1851, passed the act enabling municipal libraries to be formed, two or three of the citizens of New Bedford, notably James B. Congdon and Warren Ladd, at once moved to arouse a public sentiment enabling New Bedford to take advantage of this act. Warren Ladd at the July, 1851, meeting of the city council introduced a preliminary order, and the ordinance establishing the library was passed on the 16th of August, 1852. The city seal just adopted had declared that the aim of the city was to shed light and knowledge; the literal was to be made figurative, and the lamp of wisdom and learning was to be lighted and tended for the benefit of all the citizens.

There had been several private libraries of some importance which ante-dated the establishment of this library. The old Encyclopaedia Society, so-called from the purchase of Dobson's Encyclopaedia as the base of its collection, was one of the earliest of these private libraries. The most notable, however, was the Social Library, which was estab-



lished early in the 19th century, and which continued for many years to serve its purpose as a respectable collection of books for the edification of its proprietors. In time the collection amounted to about 5,000 books. The whole of the Social Library amounting to 5,500 books was transferred to the Free Public Library, which opened its doors on March 3, 1853, with a store of 6,000 volumes in the Perkins building, 139 Union street near Purchase.

In the first report, issued after the library had been opened for only a few weeks, the trustees expressed the hope that this "will open to our inhabitants a library rich in the means of intellectual culture, and forming a new and attractive feature in the public recreation of the people." It will be noted that thus early in its career the idea was formulated that it is a legitimate object of public libraries to furnish recreative reading, a subject which has been discussed with vigor ever since, but our trustees, before the library had been opened two months, expressed themselves without qualifications.

One of the first purchases made by the library was the Boydell Shakespeare.

Another quotation from the first report reads "A striking and delightful feature in our operations is the large number of females who visit the rooms, both as takers of books and readers of our periodicals. Nearly one-half of the names upon our books are those of females." Again the same report mentions as among the regulations of the library the establishment of a waiting list, another question which has been the shuttle-cock of opinion in library circles for many years. Article 16 says "Any book may be re-taken, provided no application has been made for the same by another person, and the librarian requested to make a record of application."

During the first year 22,607 books were circulated.

In the second report, a motto was announced as a proper guidance in the use of the library, and which was repeated through successive reports for many years: "Use

carefully, return promptly. These are the two fundamental rules upon which the prosperity of the library must rest."

In the third year, covering the year 1854, the prudent and careful custodians of the library began to feel the necessity of a larger building, and incidentally the search for a Carnegie, who should bestow upon the city a new building and receive the plaudits of the citizens. They say, "Are we mistaken in supposing that there are those among us, who, desirous of devoting a portion of the wealth which Providence has bestowed upon them, to the public good, and prompted by a laudable ambition to give such a direction to their munificence as will secure to them the gratitude of their fellow-citizens and the regard of posterity, will erect a monument so noble in its purpose, so elevating in its results? No doubtful or limited benefit would attend upon the consummation of such an undertaking. Without restriction or qualification will be accorded to him the title of public benefactor, who shall thus generously and benevolently allow his name to designate the structure which shall be reared for the purpose of our free public library." But as if feeling that perhaps they were asking too much, their attention was drawn to the City Hall, and the suggestion is made that the "accommodation of the library in the lower story of that safe, central, and beautiful building" would be an ideal location for the library. This city hall which was looked at with such envious eyes nearly sixty years ago is the building which has now been devoted entirely to library purposes. At that time the basement of the hall was used for a market, and the trustees waxed eloquent in advising that books supplant beef and that poultry be displaced by poetry. But better times were in store for the library; it was not necessary to dispossess the dealers in beef and cabbages of their chosen quarters, for the city fathers, stirred by the eloquence of James B. Congdon and his associates, aroused themselves and secured the erection of a library building, which they thought would be ample for very many years to house the library on the top floor, and to accommodate the public offices on the floors below.

The corner stone of the Library building was laid with imposing ceremony on the 28th of August, 1856, the architect was Solomon K. Eaton, and Henry Pierce was the builder. When the corner stone was laid a procession was formed on Market Square, south of this building, headed by the assistant marshal and a brass band; next came the marshal, the ex-mayors of the city, clergy, and the city officials, who moved in procession around the block and to the site of the library across the street. George Howland, Jr., was mayor of the city at the time, and presided at the exercises. A characteristic address was made by James B. Congdon, Esq., who might be called the Father of the Library, and a poem by Charles T. Congdon, who afterwards acquired some note as a newspaper man. I quote a few lines from this poem of Mr. Congdon's which will be sufficient to give an idea of the metre and the general character of the verse.

"How few of all who now its portals seek,
Went to the library but once a week!
You every day receive its liberal boon;
We went at three, on seventh day afternoon;
Unchecked you banquet on the general fare;
We took a single volume on each share;
Kept it a week; might keep it three weeks more;
Were fined just nine-pence if we kept it o'er."

The poem ended with these lines:

"There was a time when if one simply said:—
'Lend me this book?' the owner shook his head,
And smelling thieves in that preposterous call,
Padlocked the book, and chained it to the wall;
You, in the spirit of the time's great gain,
Have taken off the padlock and the chain;
For this still look, in all the time to be,
For youth aspiring, and for manhood free."

One of the first donations made to the library was the gift of George Howland, Jr., who gave his salary for two

years as mayor of the city to establish a fund which is still in existence as the George Howland, Jr. fund, "the income to be devoted for the purchase of valuable works of science of a more expensive character than we should feel authorized to purchase by the money appropriated by the municipal government."

In 1859 the library was made the custodian of congressional documents.

The building was opened to the public on Nov. 9, 1857. During a term of years the establishment of funds for book purchases became quite a feature. The Charles W. Morgan fund was established in 1865, and the Sylvia Ann Howland fund of \$50,000 became available the same year.

The most valuable gift of a single book was that by James Arnold, the founder of the Arnold Arboretum, and a resident of New Bedford, who gave to the library an original folio edition of Audubon's Birds.

The James B. Congdon fund was given to the library in 1877. Other gifts were made by Oliver Crocker in 1878, George O. Crocker in 1888, Charles L. Wood in 1892, which furnished book funds providing ample means for supplying the library with all the books which its cramped quarters could possibly accommodate.

In 1904 the will of Mrs. Sarah E. Potter gave the library a bequest of \$250,000, "the income to be used for the purchase of books, pictures, and other articles suitable for the equipment and maintenance of the library." This munificent gift has enabled the library to make large purchases of books and pictures which otherwise would have been beyond our means, and to promise a satisfactory income for the future.

Again, to show how the management of the library anticipated many of the problems which confront present day library workers, in the 26th annual report covering the year 1877, the trustees "are happy to mention the interesting fact that a large part of the visitors to the library consists of pupils from the schools * * * * the statement is as creditable to the schools as to the library; for

no better evidence could be had that the instruction given by the teachers who encourage this kind of intellectual inquiry is of the most discriminating and improving quality." Again, on the question of the circulation of fiction, the conclusion of the trustees of that time is expressed as follows:

"To exclude works of fiction from the library, therefore, would be to curtail its positive advantages. At the same time, we recognize the necessity of a judicious care in the supply of works of this description, and we have added to our list of novels only those which we believe to be wholesome and useful, and which may stimulate to something better and higher.

"The sensational element occupies a very small space in our circulation, yet even that has its advantages. For, were we to exclude it wholly, we should drive away a class of readers who most need to be brought within reach of the improving influences of the library. While they find enough of the sensational to encourage their visits, they often fail to obtain the books of which they are in search, and are led to take those of a more improving character. We are happy to record a marked advancement in this connection, the works of fiction now oftenest called for being the best of their class."

As a growing child finds that his clothes are soon outgrown, in 1878 the trustees asked "for the use of the whole of the Library building, since their quarters are becoming very much crowded." It was not, however, until 1886 that the old building was enlarged by an addition on the north which entirely changed the arrangement of the floor plan of the building, and added largely to the stack capacity.

In 1884 in the 32nd report a proposal was made that the city government publish the records of Old Dartmouth, but this suggestion was not acted upon until the present ample funds of the library have allowed the trustees to engage in the work, which is now being carried on as a contribution to the vital records of the state. The whole expense of copying these records is borne by the library, and the work has been carried on for over a year and is not yet completed, but

when finished will be an extremely important document in the history of this section.

On March 3, 1901, the library met with a most serious loss in the death of Robert C. Ingraham, who had served the library as its chief librarian for nearly 50 years. No more faithful servant of the public ever held office. His interests were centered in the library he loved so well, and his enthusiasm and devotion communicated itself to others until all who came in contact with his charming personality were imbued somewhat with his spirit. He finished a great work to which he had devoted his life, and it is deemed fitting that in this building should be set apart the main reading room to be called forever Ingraham Hall in memory of his noble service. As the editor of *The Standard* said in his tribute to Mr. Ingraham. "By his simple devotion to the one duty of his long life service, Robert C. Ingraham has made this community his permanent debtor."

In spite of the enlargement of the old building in 1886, the need of an entirely new building for the library was deemed urgent enough to embody in the report of the trustees for 1891. From that time nearly every succeeding report emphasized this need, until in 1906 the fire in the old City Hall afforded the prospect of securing our new building. The fire which occurred in December, 1906, proved to be a blessing in disguise. If Mr. Congdon, the historian of the library who wrote all the earlier reports, could have lived to express his sentiments upon the occasion, he certainly would have penned an eloquent description of the Promethean torch which was brought from heaven to bring about the consummation so devoutly wished for. Surely the result has proved most beneficial.

The building plans were put into the hands of Mr. Nat C. Smith, the architect, who remodeled the old structure, preserving the old lines and carrying out most admirably the spirit of the original builders, until the result has given us a building more beautiful than the old, and yet expressing the same severe outlines in its exterior. To single out any individuals for credit in pushing the building forward

to completion would be an invidious task, but it certainly is not out of place to give a great deal of credit to the foresight and intense interest shown by the mayor, Charles S. Ashley, in helping to formulate and carry out the plans of the building committee. The earnestness and zeal with which he has forwarded and seconded every move has been no small feature in accomplishing the result which we are enjoying today for the first time. In opening this building for the use of the city, everyone connected with the library feels with a deep sense of responsibility a wonderful quickening and a strong incentive for better work. The material is at hand; the surroundings are ample for many years; the library has great resources for filling its shelves; it is for us who are in charge so to administer the trust that the greatest benefit shall reach the greatest number, and I feel that, with a due sense of the seriousness of the words, I can thoroughly pledge the co-operation and willing labors of everyone connected with the library to further that purpose. To this end the library from time to time must expand the range of its activities, so that the civilizing influence of such an institution shall be felt by every one in the city.

HORACE G. WADLIN

The city of New Bedford exemplifies the energy and material progress of the modern world. With a history of which it may well be proud, and a Puritan ancestry, whose hardy descendants braved the dangers of the sea that light might be diffused in dark places, it has readily conformed to changed conditions and the era of machinery, until it has become a leader in the great textile industry, its extensive factories representing millions of capital and giving employment to thousands of operatives. Its population, slightly more than 20,000 when this library became a municipal institution, less than 30,000 even as late as 1880, is now 96,652. Once largely of Anglo-Saxon lineage, it now includes many lines of descent, Latin as well as Anglo-Saxon, focussed here, and, under the influence of the democratic spirit, here to be woven into the fabric of American life. It is a city composed of various elements held together by the modern organization of industry, of which the supreme type is one of your factories, equipped to intensify human effort by means of the co-ordinated operation of a series of powerful and ingenious steam-driven machines, but it is also a city which may pause, even in the busy hours of a working day, to contemplate for a moment what men have done in the past to promote literature and art. What does the public library mean to such a city?

In the first place, this building and its contents represent here a triumph of democracy. The revolution, under law, slowly transforming the world, brings with it so many unlovely things that we are apt to forget its triumphs which inspire us with faith in the benefits that it may ultimately confer upon humanity. There is nothing spectacular about a public library, and it seldom reflects the lime light thrown upon the centre of the stage. In New Bedford, for example,

it is the remarkable industrial progress of the city and the increase of wealth here in the aggregate that will be most frequently referred to as noteworthy. The favorite topic of the orator of the hour who is pointing with pride to the accomplishments of the century in America is this marvellous increase in wealth; and, on the other hand, there are at this moment some hundreds of caustic pens engaged in showing how closely that wealth is concentrated in few hands. But neither of these things is typical of democracy. The effort of democracy is not merely to enlarge wealth in the lump, and certainly not to confine its ownership to the few, but to promote the growth of wealth in common, so that wherever wealth exists its benefits must necessarily be shared with all; and of that effort the public library—such a building as this, built, filled and supported from the proceeds of voluntary taxation, is a conspicuous illustration. Not one person who uses this library, but has at his command—really owns, privileges formerly restricted to a limited class. And they who administer such libraries are really the custodians of wealth in common, for the benefit of all, that through the use of what is thus dedicated still larger public benefits may come.

For centuries the theory prevailed that the domain of letters exclusively belonged to scholars. In the possession of scholars only, rested the intellectual heritage of the past, and to the scholar alone belonged the privilege of interpretation and the duty of transmission of the collected wisdom of the ages. And the opportunities of scholarship, like the field of opportunity in general, were restricted to those who by birth or fortune were within the barriers which surrounded the aristocracy of letters. The statues of Phidias, the pictures of a da Vinci or of a Rafael, the sculptured glories of the mediaeval cathedral belonged to all the people, but books were then, and for many subsequent years remained the exclusive possessions of the few, and the ability to read books was confined largely to those fortunate persons who, by holding the keys of knowledge, became the custodians of thought, alone entitled to express authorita-

tive opinions upon the great intellectual problems affecting the common welfare. To adopt a figure recently used by Professor Bliss Perry, in discriminating authors who appeal to the cultivated from those who address the masses, they who had the use of books were like favored guests at a select garden party, while outside the gates, with no possible chance of obtaining tickets of admission, was the great multitude of the uninvited.

But the barriers are now thrown down, and he who runs may read. This building, erected in a city which is imbued with the modern spirit of invention, of machinery, of the organization of labor under the factory system, stands as an institution which connects the busy, teeming life of today with the life of the remote past. Its walls serve as a background for the unfolding panorama of the world's history, and here the men and women of this year of grace 1910, without distinction of class, may feel that they have somewhat in common with former generations, that the successes and failures of the past are linked with theirs, and that the words written for spiritual comfort, for practical guidance, or to promote pure enjoyment, which in the past have been committed to the printed page are open to them. Thus, insensibly, the life of today in this centre of changed and changing conditions, may gain a permanence and character it can acquire in no other way. It may take on something of the beauty of the deeply rooted forest which draws its sustenance from myriad sources, constantly expanding with the changing seasons, its boughs uplifted to meet the dawn, but its supporting stems attached to the anchorage of an elder day.

The destruction of the barriers has brought responsibilities as well as privileges. Questions affecting the welfare of humanity are no longer confined to the discussion of scholars. They may be considered by all men. They become your questions and mine. They are no longer academic. They touch every man's business, and the intercourse of one with another in the market, the workshop and in politics. They affect the relations of the sexes, the safe-



REFERENCE ROOM

guards of the family, the sanctities of the home. The permanent prosperity of your city depends upon the answers which are finally given to these questions not by two or three prominent citizens, not by the editors of your daily papers, not by the so-called educated class only, however competent any of these may be to answer them, and I certainly should be the last to question their competency; but the man in the street, the busy workers in your mills, the young men and women who are to create the New Bedford of tomorrow. Not by those who have heretofore held tickets to the garden party, but by the multitude outside the gates. I venture to say that answers are in process of framing, some of them widely at variance with the accepted canons or the conventional formulas. Yet not one of these questions can be rightly answered apart from the light thrown upon them in books. The public library, wherever established, means that the garden, with its opportunities shall be open to all. The scholar prized his privileges and used them. That the privileges are no longer restricted does not diminish their value. It is our business to see that our wider opportunities are not disregarded.

A library like this therefore cannot remain merely a place in which books are deposited and preserved, a function performed by many libraries in the past. It must aid in the development of the mental and moral fibre of your citizens. It must provide for their special needs as residents in an industrial centre, promoting skill, manual and artistic, in your great industry; and it must meet their needs in hours of relaxation from work, by giving them acquaintance with the books which are not mere tools, but deal with the world of romance and fancy and innocent pleasure. It must provide for young and old, for women as well as men, and for all the varied classes who make up your population. In short it must meet the widest possible needs of a democracy in the use of books, and in the cultivation of the intellect.

This institution stands, therefore, and, if I mistake not, stands alone in your city, as a connecting link between the

old and the new intellectual regimes,—the eras of intellectual aristocracy and of intellectual democracy, preserving the best thought of the past and making it available for present use and future need. For now, as always, civilization is largely dependent upon the collected wisdom of the past recorded in books, and transmitted from one generation to another. From the vantage ground thus obtained progress to higher levels becomes possible; and the best service a public library can render is in making this wisdom available in the promotion of a better civic life.

What are the things most needed in our growing towns and cities, where we are called upon to assimilate diverse and conflicting elements? Right conduct, of course, but underlying conduct are knowledge and faith, and breadth of view, and a sane theory of life, and duty, and some comprehension of the world in which we live, of our place in it, of our relations to our neighbors and to the community. Book knowledge alone will not suffice, but nevertheless the book is a most efficient teacher. "We may depend upon it," said William Hazlitt, "that what men delight to read in books they will put in practice in reality."

I am aware that there may be a misuse of books, as of any other good thing. "A circulating library in any community," said Sir Anthony Absolute to Mrs. Malaprop, "is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge." Indiscriminate reading is as much to be deplored as indiscriminate feeding, and the intellectual inebriate, whether his favorite tipple be the latest thriller in fiction, or the numerous books which offer panaceas for physical or social ills, is to be pitied, and if possible restrained, as any other victim of intemperance. You can, perhaps, do little with the confirmed inebriate, but for those of unformed habits there is hope.

The world's heroes today are the men of action, the men who achieve something new and important in the field of scientific or material progress, the great scientists, inventors, engineers, constructors, the work of these men appeals to the imagination now, as in the past that of the

great soldiers or adventurers. The cloistered life seems an anomaly to us, and those who spend their days not even in teaching or in authorship, but in the quiet, unobtrusive daily routine of employment within a public library attract little attention, miss the plaudits of the crowd, gain no more than a modest competence, and are without much honor save in their own country, that world of books which is inhabited principally by their colleagues. But such a life is really not less useful than many which bulk more largely in the public view.

All our boasted material progress, the work of the heroes of industrial and scientific achievement, is but the culmination of the intellectual awakening that followed the invention of printing and the dissemination of knowledge by means of the printed book. It is by no means accidental that in Massachusetts, despite our rock-bound coast and sterile soil, wealth has accumulated, and that here all the evidences of a highly organized civilization appear, with a high degree of prosperity for the common, average man. The fruits of a developed intellect may be seen in industrial progress, in the applications of skill and invention, as well as in the great poem or the great picture. It is here that the public schools under Horace Mann, and the public library fostered by Everett and Ticknor have made their influence felt to an extent far greater than elsewhere in broadening the intellectual life of the common people, in developing skill, in awakening intelligence, in stimulating productive energy, and in inspiring the imagination and the fancy.

Who shall set bounds to the influence that this extension of intellectual privilege has had, or will continue to have, upon the material and intellectual progress of a city like this? Here, for example, to take but one possible case out of many, is a young man without money or influence, but who possesses a spark of that genius which, properly fostered, is the source of power. In some other age, perhaps, "a mute inglorious Milton," but now, through the opportunities for study given by such a public library as

this, he perfects an invention, or writes a poem, or enters a useful profession, by means of which he ministers to the comfort and enjoyment of his fellowmen.

May I, in conclusion, remind you of one thing more: "This life of the human spirit," says a recent writer, "is a process of perpetual becoming. * * * * It is life only while it is growth in life. And from the point of view of the spirit the progress of history is measured not by the spread of material conquests or the accumulation of the equipment of civilization, but by the progressive emancipation of the individual, and the deepening and broadening of the content of his personal life." I know of no more helpful aid in the broadening of one's life than the acquaintance with books. It means much for a modern city which occupies a commanding position in the industrial world of to-day, that it provides for the free use of a well-equipped library; and surely they perform no slight service for their fellowmen who here bring to the knowledge of good books those that without such guidance must follow a blind lead.



JUVENILE ROOM

THE NEW LIBRARY

The new Free Public Library of this city, dedicated to its beneficent service today, and opened for the discharge of its functions tomorrow, merits the attention of the people of other municipalities, because it is paid for by the people themselves and is not the evidence of the mendicant spirit which, directly or indirectly, solicits the benefactions of a stranger. It exemplifies in that respect the sturdy spirit of those men of earlier New Bedford to whom the edifice is the most impressive visible monument now existent. They stood on their own feet. When they built their town hall, almost three-quarters of a century ago, they constructed a building which in its serenely plain aspect of strength and massiveness, exactly typified what they were themselves, and what were their conceptions of civic responsibility. To those of us to whom the building has been a familiar sight since childhood, it is a source of infinite and inexpressible satisfaction that it is now so magnificently perpetuated in a form which we trust will endure for many generations to come. And we are sure that every one of those generations will find the greatest satisfaction in the reflection that this is the library for which the people of New Bedford have paid themselves.

This newspaper makes no pretensions to the possession of architectural expertness, and therefore omits discussion of details. But it may be pardoned for believing that the architect has solved most admirably, on the whole, the rather difficult problem of extending and enlarging the building in a manner to preserve the spirit and the motive of the original. He had, indeed, an imposing structure at the outset. But we feel certain that he has made it still more imposing. We have all the dignity of the old building

in the new one, and in some respects that dignity is increased. There is a choice in points of view, but we think one who attentively considers the building from the northeast corner of William and Pleasant streets, or from a location on the east side of Pleasant street, directly opposite the corner door of The Standard office, will find that it is markedly improved in the matter of an imposing appearance.

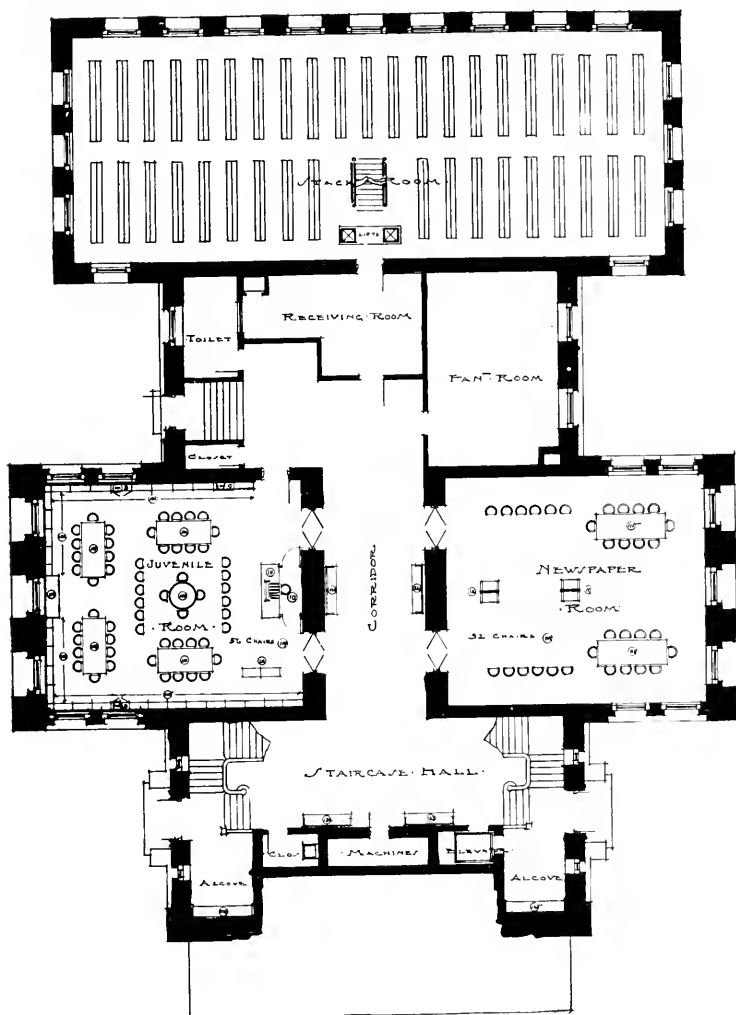
As many persons by this time know, the interior retains no resemblance in any respect to the original. This part of the reconstruction had to be carried out with especial reference to the needs of library work as library work is conducted in these days. Comparing what has been accomplished here with what is seen in some far more pretentious libraries, the verdict must be that the result is good. It is eminently a library for service. It is made to use. It is made so that it can be used conveniently. Patrons will find ample and excellent provision for their needs. For an arrangement which shall fulfill the purposes of a library, scarce anything is left to be suggested for improvement. Decorative and artistic effects have importance, but, after all, they are subsidiary and incidental. The main thing is the library itself, and provision for this is entitled to the highest praise. It is but simple justice to credit the librarian with having largely been instrumental in securing this happy result. To his study of libraries, and to his suggestions, very much of the working efficiency of the plan—if so it may be phrased—is due. As for the decoration, it would be folly to pretend to admiration of every detail. Nevertheless, where so much is in admirable taste, adverse criticism would in this place be ungracious. As a whole the effect is surely to delight the eye, and to be a source of endless instruction in constructive beauty.

But, all this said, the building itself is only the storehouse of an immeasurable wealth, which, as never before, is the occasion of a great opportunity for the people of New Bedford. Somebody has called the Free Public Library “the” university of the people. We think the definite

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

NAT. E. SMITH ARCHITECT
New Bedford, Mass.



GROUND FLOOR

article altogether too exclusive. There are many branches of the university of the people. This is one, and, to be fair, one of the most important. It opens to the people uncounted and uncountable treasures of the world's best thought and wisdom. It furnishes rational enjoyment. It offers instruction in every field of human knowledge. More than all this, it may be an efficient aid to the building of character. May the fine new library and its noble collection serve to increase in this city the spirit of civic pride, the emotion of a real patriotism, the realization of the obligations of citizenship, the sense of brotherhood in all our people, the growth of the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men!—W. L. Sayer, in *The Evening Standard*.

One great source of satisfaction and congratulation with relation to the opening of the Free Public Library lies in the fact that it does not exploit the name of Carnegie. Generations gone before had been distinguished by their regard for the library. For many years it had been maintained by private subscription, and when the legislature made possible the enlargement of municipal activities, New Bedford was the first to adopt the provisions of the act, whereby the first public library supported from general taxation was established here. Later on the city built a library building, which was outgrown in the course of municipal growth, and then came the time when public spirit could not be aroused to the proper maintenance of the institution. For a long period the situation was discouraging. As the collection grew, space was more and more encroached upon until the utility of the library was actually restricted by the wealth of treasures which filled it. Every available foot of space was occupied, and the attic was crowded with valuable documents, until the library became a storehouse, with a few feet of space at one end for public use and accommodation.

At this stage, the suggestion was heard that the citizens make application to the philanthropist who was making a specialty of library giving. It is creditable to the people of this city that the proposition met with meagre sanction, but no alternative appeared until the fortunate fire which burned out the old City Hall, leaving standing, however, the impressive walls and facade which gave the building highest rank among the great examples of Doric architecture. It was then that the Mercury first made the suggestion that the building should be remodeled for the use of the library, preserving the stately front. Mayor Ashley followed up the Mercury's suggestion with a recommendation in his inaugural address, and the city council made an appropriation for the purpose.

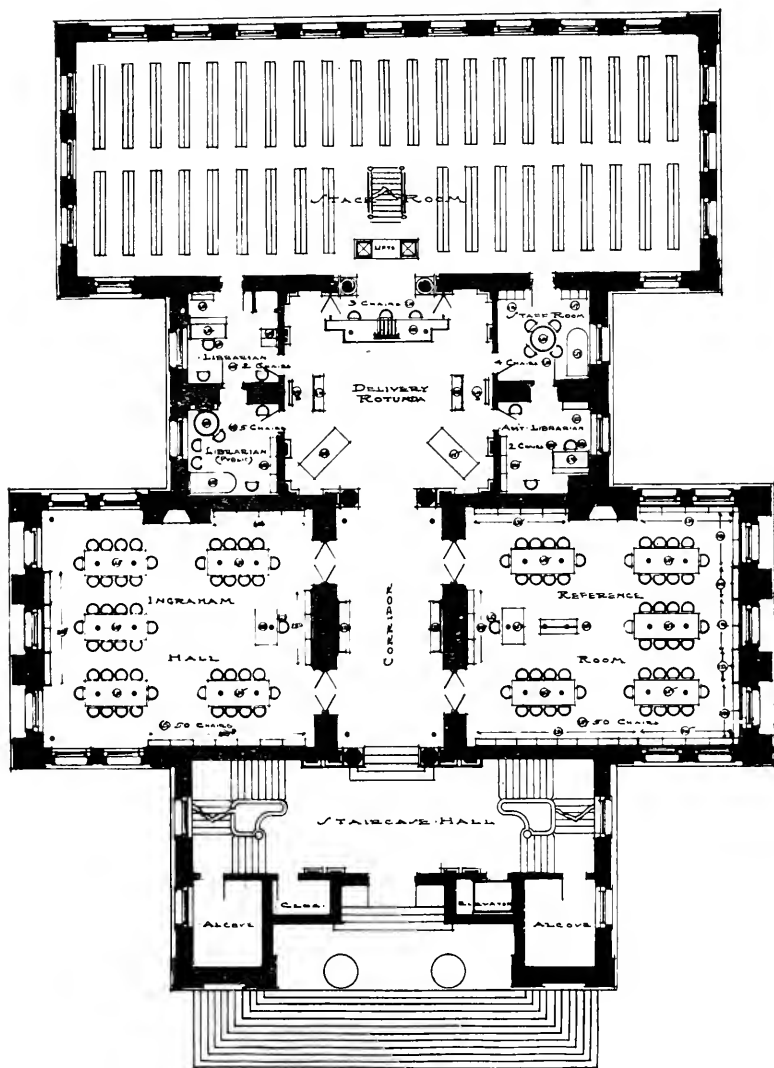
It is a splendid tribute to the social esteem of the citizens of New Bedford that they built the library for themselves without appeal to outsiders. The achievement was more successful than the advocates of the idea dared to dream. The architect, Nathaniel C. Smith, more than fulfilled anticipations, and the completed building has lost nothing of its exterior appeal, while the interior has a character no less delightful. It was observed by one of the visitors yesterday that the building lacked the institutional character which is a detriment to so many libraries. The homelike atmosphere is a striking characteristic of the interior and every room invites the visitor to tarry. The magnitude of the library was another source of surprise to the visitor who saw it for the first time. It seemed to be a popular impression that only the main floor was for public uses. When the visitors found three floors given over to charming suites of rooms, with the general suggestion of a large clubhouse, and realized that such opportunities for reading and study were for their perpetual use, the general expression was one of surprise and delight.

It is here revealed what a treasure house the old library was in reality. The opportunity for the display of the special collections shows how rich is the library in these lines. The collection of prints and art works, for instance,

· FREE · PUBLIC · LIBRARY ·

NEW BEDFORD · MASS ·

· NAT C SMITH, ARCHITECT
New Bedford · MASS ·



MAIN FLOOR

fills almost all available space in the large room given up to it. There is now access to thousands of volumes of popular reading, while the book stacks in the wing at the rear will hold 300,000 volumes.

The public is in great debt to the discernment of Robert C. Ingraham, the late librarian, who was so persistent in making the special collections of local history, whaling literature, genealogy, and Quakeriana, which make the library distinguished among the great libraries of the country. These features of the library are being sympathetically followed out by the present librarian, George H. Tripp, and it is a source of gratification that private bequests, the establishment of the Potter fund of a quarter of a million to be exclusively used in the purchase of books, sculpture, and paintings, being the last, will enable the library to constantly enhance the collection. One of the uses to which this income is applied is the commission given to Francis D. Millet, the artist, to paint a mural decoration illustrative of the whaling industry, and expenditures of this character will make it possible to further adorn the beautiful edifice.

The convenience of the location, by the way, is no unimportant factor, which leads to more congratulations that the library is placed upon the square where it stands, conveniently accessible to the citizens, instead of being relegated to the top of the hill, a location for which many of the friends of the library made, at one time, a stout contest.

One loves to dwell upon the influence which the institution will exert in the community. It is destined to a great accomplishment, we believe, in contributing to the pleasure and culture of the people, the making of better citizens, and in raising civic esteem.—Z. W. Pease, in *The Morning Mercury*.

SHORT SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

The New Bedford City Hall, the center of the civic life of the town and city for seventy years, was erected in 1838-9. The funds for its construction were in part a sum received from the United States government at the distribution of surplus revenue in 1837, the remainder was provided by the city.

The architects were Russell Warren of Providence and Seth H. Ingalls of New Bedford. The contractors and builders were S. H. Ingalls and W. Ingalls. The committee of the Town Government in charge of construction comprised Hon. James Howland, George Howland, Jr., Hon. Joseph Grinnell, Zachariah Hillman, George T. Baker, and James B. Congdon.

The first action on the part of the town was at a meeting on April 3, 1837, when the selectmen were authorized to purchase a lot on William street for the purpose of constructing a new Market, and at an adjourned session on the 17th, it was voted to "appropriate that part of the surplus revenue which shall be apportioned to this town, together with the sum of \$12,000, which is now in the treasury and applicable to that purpose, to the purchase of a lot and the erection of a Town Hall and Market House on William street."

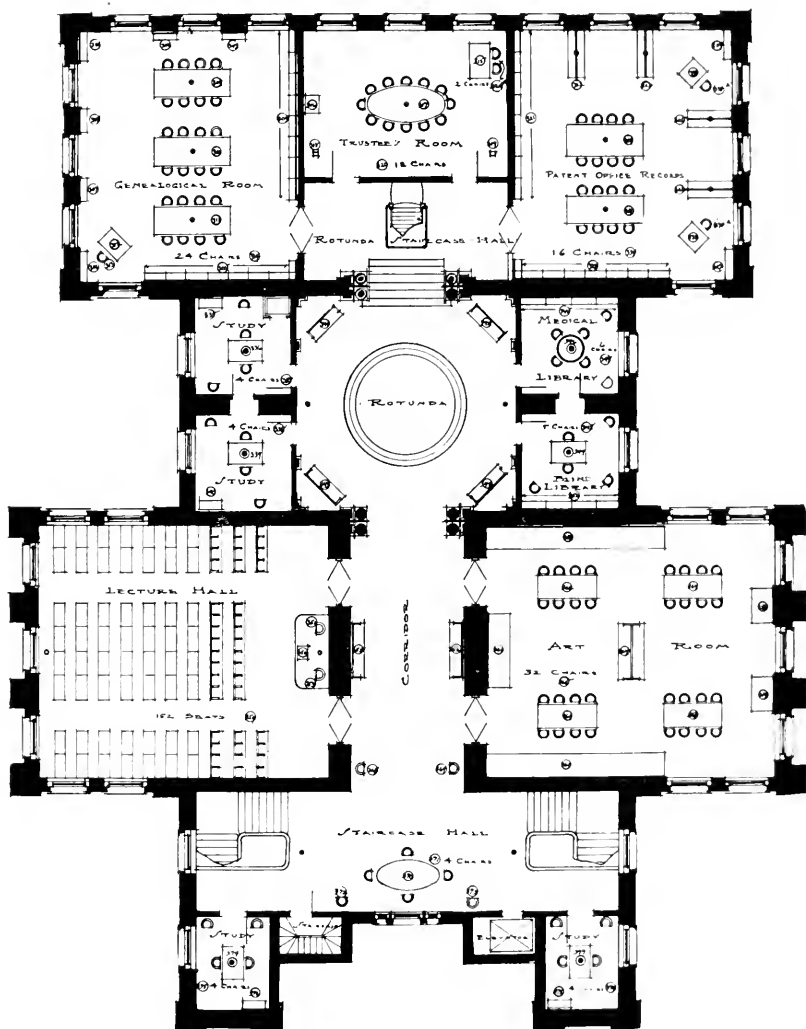
The building was constructed of local and Fall River granite, and is 100 feet long by 61 feet wide; three stories high. At the front of the entrance are two massive fluted Doric columns.

At first all the town and city offices were housed on the top floor, the main floor being reserved for a hall, the lower floor at first being used for a Market, later occupied by city offices. In 1872 the Market was removed from the basement floor. In 1854 the trustees of the Free Public Library de-

FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

NEW BEDFORD - MASS

MAY C. SMITH, ARCHITECT
New Bedford, Mass



SECOND FLOOR

sired to occupy the lower floor for library purposes, but the plan to construct the present library building obviated the necessity for pressing the matter.

During the seventy years of its active service as the home of the City Government the building has furnished useful and varied services, the hall proper serving as a forum for all varieties of civic and political meetings, and a convenient place for holding many social gatherings. The fire which occurred on December 11, 1906, terminated the history of the building as a City Hall, and almost immediately public sentiment manifested itself in favor of remodelling the building for use as a Free Public Library.—From the “Commemorative Exercises” held in City Hall, March 30, 1908.

In remodelling the building, care was taken by the architect, Mr. Nat. C. Smith, to preserve the features which made the old building so imposing. The building, which had been erected on the monumental plan of the Doric Greek temple, was so altered that there was very little deviation from the original plan, the exterior changes consisting of the extension of the pavilions, which were left undeveloped by the original designer of the building, and the addition of a stack room at the rear.

In the interior, while the window heights were made the same, the floor levels were all changed.

The entrances are at the front and at the two front corners, while the children are provided with an independent entrance giving easy access to their room.

On the ground floor are the Newspaper Room and the Children's Room. The walls of the Newspaper Room are covered with the whaling prints which are owned by the library, and which have been framed to correspond with the wood work. The other rooms in the basement are the janitors' quarters, and the fan room, which distributes the heat brought by tunnel from the Municipal Building across the street. There are work rooms also on this floor. The furniture of the first floor is of oak, with floors of cork and

rubber tiling, while the corridor has a floor of marble mosaic. The furniture of the other floors is mahogany.

On the next story, which is the main floor, the Reference Room and the Information Department, which also contains the magazine files, is on the right. Across the hall is the main reading room, called Ingraham Hall. The Librarian's rooms, and the rooms for the staff are on either side of the rotunda, at the end of which is the main delivery desk in front of the stack, which contains five floors, with a capacity of 260,000 books.

On the Mezzanine floor are the Accession and Cataloguing rooms, which communicate by book-lift with the Librarian's office and the work room in the basement.

On the third floor is the Art Room on the right, and the Lecture Room on the left; four study rooms, a room for the Medical Library, and a room for the books for the blind. On this floor, above the top floor of the stack, is the Patent Office Room, containing the collection of Patent Office Reports, drawings, and specifications; the Genealogical Room, which contains family histories and the local New England histories, and a room for the trustees.





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